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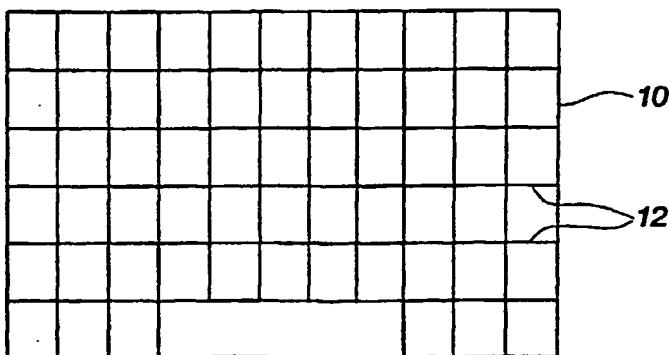
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(54) Title: A MINIATURE KEYBOARD FOR A PERSONAL DIGITAL ASSISTANT AND AN INTEGRATED WEB BROWSING AND DATA INPUT DEVICE



(57) Abstract: A miniature keyboard (10) that operates by utilizing a finger to touch a capacitance sensitive touchpad. A touchpad is divided up into predefined zones (12) that are assigned to be the desired characters on a keyboard. The touchpad is relatively small so that it can be coupled to an information appliance and operated in the manner that is customary for the device.

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**A MINIATURE KEYBOARD FOR A PERSONAL DIGITAL ASSISTANT
AND AN INTEGRATED WEB BROWSING AND DATA INPUT DEVICE**

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BACKGROUND

1. The Field Of The Invention.

This invention relates generally to data input
10 and Internet navigation devices. More specifically,
the invention provides compact and convenient keyboard
data input for a variety of mobile devices, including
personal digital assistants (PDAs), an integrated
Internet navigation, and mobile phones. An important
15 feature is the ability to provide audible feedback so
that the user has precise information about
keystrokes, and an optional microphone input for voice
transmission and messaging purposes.

20 **2. The State Of The Art**

The state of the relevant art spans several
disciplines because the present invention not only
integrates a plurality of different technologies, but
its applications are quite broad. The proliferation
25 of small information appliances has brought many
challenges to users who want to enter data into these
devices. For example, there are now many different
types of personal digital assistants (PDAs) which help
users store and organize information. Such
30 information has included appointments, calendars,
addresses and telephone numbers.

Data entry of alphanumerical information has
always been a challenge in PDAs because there is a
relatively small surface area available for data

entry. For example, providing a separate key for each letter of the English alphabet and the numbers 0 through 9 requires a significant amount of space on a small information appliance. Nevertheless, the entry 5 of alphanumerical data is becoming more and more important because of the Internet.

One solution offered in the prior art is a collapsible keyboard. In other words, the keyboard unfolds to form a larger keyboard which can be coupled 10 to a small electronic appliance such as a PDS.

Obviously, this keyboard can only be used when the user has a surface on which the keyboard can be unfolded, and the PDS attached. This necessarily limits the use of the keyboard.

15 The importance of the Internet, the e-commerce that it has generated, and new forms of communicating has created the need for other types of information appliances that can do more than store dates and addresses. For example, PDAs such as the PALM(TM) 20 PILOT(TM) and the HANDSPRING(TM) VISOR(TM) can now provide access to the Internet. Cellular telephones and smart phones are also becoming Internet capable. Accordingly, users can now send and receive email or even browse the World Wide Web using devices that were 25 not originally intended for use with the Internet.

Disadvantageously, means of entering alphanumerical data is a problem for such small devices. One method that is used to enter alphanumerical data is through the use of a shorthand 30 script. However, this generally requires the user to employ a small stylus, and to memorize the script. Furthermore, the stylus can be lost, or even dropped during use. Other methods of input include using

miniature keyboards that often require the use of a stylus if they are to fit within the available surface area.

Of interest is the method employed by cellular 5 telephones because they are so limited in surface area. Letters can be entered using the keypad. The user presses a key which represents a group of letters. The user must then select which letter among the group of letters that is to be entered. However, 10 there are some limitations to this method. For example, the letters Q and Z are not provided on a standard keypad. Furthermore, there are a limited number of discrete keys.

It would therefore be an advantage over the prior 15 art to provide a new system for entry of characters on a small electronic appliance that provided all of the options of a standard keyboard, yet was small enough to be mobile, and not require the use of a stylus to operate.

20 The examples given above are small appliances which are becoming ubiquitous in the marketplace. However, the present invention also enables the operation of a new type of device. Specifically, the present invention makes possible an integrated web 25 browsing and data input device. But to understand the need for such a device, it is useful to consider the nature of the Internet.

One of the maturing technologies on the Internet 30 is the World Wide Web which is a type of information format. The World Wide Web (the Web hereinafter) is a loose collection of web sites which are comprised of viewable web pages. Web pages are text and graphics

that are formatted according to specific protocols, such as the Hyper Text Markup Language (HTML).

Web pages are always viewed using a web browser. Moving from web page to web page, or navigating using the web browser, is commonly referred to as web browsing or surfing. Typically, web browsing is accomplished by following interconnecting links between different web pages. This link feature has given rise to a specific hierarchical structure of the web pages. Accordingly, web browsing is often a process of moving "forwards" and "backwards" between linked web pages.

The nature of the World Wide Web typically precludes the input of large amounts of data. In other words, alphanumerical data input is typically limited to short and cryptic phrases, such as when entering user names, passwords, and abbreviated sentences in chat rooms. Therefore, while it is important to be able to input alphanumerical data, it is not necessary to dedicate a large amount of space to this activity on a handheld device when the primary function is more often going to be movement among web pages, downloading and uploading data, and sending and receiving email. Nevertheless, entry of characters is difficult on a handheld device.

The prior art includes attempts to combine keyboard input and touchpad navigation input on a handheld device. Typically, the two data input areas are combined on a single touchpad surface. The user must activate different modes of operation for the touchpad surface to function as a keyboard or as a touchpad. Disadvantageously, the user must constantly switch back and forth between the user modes, as well

as remember which user mode is currently in use. It would be an advantage over the state of the art to provide separate keyboard and touchpad input areas and surfaces in a small, handheld device so that the user 5 is not confused or hampered by an awkward interface when entering data.

Another problem with the state of the art arises when a smaller than normal area is to be used for a keyboard. However, requiring a user to use a stylus 10 to press keys is not desirable for various reasons. But if a stylus is not used, it may be difficult to know exactly which key has been pressed. In other words, each key now comprises a very small amount of surface area, and broad fingertips can more easily 15 stray because it can be a little more difficult to center a finger on a desired key.

Accordingly, it would be an advantage over the prior art that when using fingers on a small keyboard that is operated by the "hunt and peck" method 20 (typically using a single fingertip to press keys), that the user receive precise feedback so as to be informed not only that a key was pressed, but exactly which key was pressed.

Another problem with the state of the art is the 25 difficulty in providing voice message capabilities. As use of the Internet has grown, new methods of communicating have evolved. For example, the transmission of audio and voice messages is becoming a more popular method of communication because speaking 30 is generally a faster way of preparing a message than typing. Accordingly, what is needed in a handheld data input and web navigation device is the capability

to receive voice input so that a voice can be transmitted or recorded as a voice message.

OBJECT AND SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

5 It is an object of the present invention to provide a system for the convenient input of alphanumerical data into a portable electronic appliance such as a PDA.

10 It is another object to provide a system which does not require the use of a stylus in order to accomplish data input on a miniature full function keyboard that is coupled to a small electronic appliance.

15 It is another object to provide a system which is a capacitance sensitive touchpad that functions as a keyboard that can be coupled to a PDA or mobile telephone.

It is another object to provide a system for improved Internet navigation and data input.

20 It is another object to provide a customized web navigation device that facilitates movement through and interaction with the World Wide Web.

25 It is another object to provide a customized web navigation device that is less cumbersome to use, and is smaller than a conventional keyboard.

It is another object to provide a customized web navigation device that is conveniently coupled to the Web utilizing wire or wireless technology.

30 It is another object to provide a customized web navigation device that has at least one switch that enables a user to select a predefined web site, and to provide access to the predefined web site.

It is another object to provide a customized web navigation device that includes a variety of methods of data input.

5 It is another object to provide the customized web navigation device that includes a miniaturized keyboard, a separate touchpad, and a microphone for the live transmission or recording of voice messages.

10 It is another object to provide the customized web navigation device that includes audible feedback which identifies which key was pressed by a user.

It is another object to provide a customized web navigation device that enables other convenient web navigation options including scrolling and zooming in and out of web pages.

15 The above objects are realized in a specific illustrative embodiment of a system and method for providing a miniature keyboard that operates by utilizing a finger to touch a capacitance sensitive touchpad. In a presently preferred embodiment, a 20 touchpad is divided up into predefined zones that are assigned to be all of the various characters on a keyboard. The touchpad keyboard is relatively small so that it can be coupled to an information appliance and operated in the manner that is customary for the 25 device.

In accordance with a first aspect of the invention, audible feedback can be provided to the user so that the user knows that a key has been pressed.

30 In accordance with a second aspect of the invention, the audible feedback is specific enough to identify the identify of the key pressed, such as through a voice that states the name of the key.

In accordance with a third aspect of the invention, the touchpad keyboard includes a mechanical wheel disposed in a side thereof which enables rapid and convenient scrolling-type functions.

5 In accordance with a fourth aspect of the invention, the touchpad keyboard is used for data input to the Internet, and for facilitating web navigation.

10 In accordance with a fifth aspect of the invention, the touchpad keyboard is disposed within a handheld web navigation and alphanumerical data input device which is coupled to a computer or other web browser terminal. The data input device includes both a touchpad keyboard which can be used with fingers, 15 and a separate touchpad surface for activities which include web navigation and cursor control.

20 In accordance with a sixth aspect of the invention, the web navigation device preferably includes a microphone to facilitate the recording of voice messages, or the live transmission of voice data over the Internet.

25 In accordance with a seventh aspect of the invention, the data input device includes at least one dedicated switch which causes a web browser to access and display data from a desired web site.

30 In accordance with an eighth aspect of the invention, the data input device includes a touchpad surface which can be used for such things as web navigation, cursor control, selection and deselection of objects, scrolling within web pages, and zooming of web pages.

These and other objects, features, advantages and alternative aspects of the present invention will

become apparent to those skilled in the art from a consideration of the following detailed description taken in combination with the accompanying drawings.

5 BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

Figure 1 is a top elevational view of a touchpad keyboard that is made in accordance with the principles of the presently preferred embodiment.

10 Figure 2 is a flowchart of the processes performed by the touchpad keyboard of the preferred embodiment.

Figure 3 is a diagram of a PDA and the touchpad keyboard that are coupled at communication ports to thereby transmit data therebetween.

15 Figure 4 is a diagram of an alternative embodiment for coupling the PDA to the touchpad keyboard via a cable.

20 Figure 5 is a diagram of a touchpad keyboard that has a scrolling wheel embedded therein for easy manipulation of data on a display screen of a portable information appliance.

Figure 6 is a logical block diagram of processes in the touchpad keyboard circuitry when audio feedback is provided.

25 Figure 7 is a block diagram of an alternative embodiment of using the touchpad keyboard in a web navigation and data input device.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

30 Reference will now be made to the drawings in which the various elements of the present invention will be given numerical designations and in which the invention will be discussed so as to enable one

skilled in the art to make and use the invention. It is to be understood that the following description is only exemplary of the principles of the present invention, and should not be viewed as narrowing the 5 claims which follow.

The presently preferred embodiment of the invention is a capacitance sensitive touchpad keyboard. The technology utilized in the touchpad keyboard is taken from the touchpad technology of 10 Cirque Corporation, and used in its various lines of computer touchpads. The touchpad technology is based upon teachings found in U.S. Patent Nos. 5,305,017, 5,861,875, 5,565,658, 5,757,368 and 5,767,457. The 15 technology is also found in co-pending non-provisional U.S. Patent application serial no. 09/603,417, filed June 22, 2000.

Figure 1 is a top view of a touchpad keyboard 10 that is utilizing the capacitance sensitive touchpad technology of Cirque Corporation. The touchpad 20 keyboard has disposed thereon a keyboard layout 12 (the grid lines). Note that a keyboard overlay 12 is only useful to the user, it does not actually provide information to the touchpad circuitry. The technology behind the capacitance sensitive touchpad is only 25 important insofar as it enables the touchpad keyboard 10 to detect and determine position of a finger on the touchpad surface. Thus, the touchpad keyboard is capable of detecting the presence of a pointing device, such as a finger, and then focusing in to 30 determine a location of the finger.

Figure 2 is a flowchart of the relevant processes that occur in the touchpad circuitry. This flowchart will illustrate the functionality of the presently

preferred embodiment. The first step 100 is to detect the presence of an object on the touchpad keyboard 10. The next step 102 is to then localize or focus on very specific coordinates of the object. Fine or precision 5 object location determination is accomplished using various software and hardware of the touchpad circuitry. However, it should be realized that the precision with which the invention must function is only that which is sufficient to determine in which 10 zone the object is located, not where in the zone the object made contact.

Once the touchpad keyboard 10 has determined where an object has made contact with the touchpad surface, it is necessary in step 104 to determine a 15 zone that corresponds to the determined location. Accordingly, there must be a database that defines the boundaries of each zone on the touchpad keyboard 10.

This zone corresponds to a specific keyboard key. Thus the next step 106 is to determine which key on 20 the touchpad keyboard corresponds to the zone of contact. It is then necessary to determine the signal that corresponds to the key in step 108. Obviously, the signal will probably be unique to the specific electronic appliance being used. The signal is then 25 transmitted to the electronic appliance in step 110.

Steps 106 and 108 involve translation processes. In other words, information from one source is then used to identify information for another step. These 30 translation processes are typically performed by a database. In the presently preferred embodiment, the database can be a look-up table. Thus, the look-up table has been programmed to correspond to the desired keyboard overlay 12 that illustrates the zones. Once

the corresponding zone is determined, the touchpad circuitry generates an appropriate signal.

The appropriate signal will be whatever signal the electronic appliance is designed to receive that corresponds to the zone or key that was touched. For example, a certain signal will correspond to the letter "A", and a different signal will correspond to the letter "B". Accordingly, the touchpad circuitry includes a signal generator that generates appropriate signals.

It was stated earlier that the touchpad keyboard 10 is physically and logically divided up into zones or regions. In other words, the touchpad keyboard 12 includes a keyboard overlay 12 that is the physical division of zones on the touchpad surface. Each zone will typically define a single key. However, a mode key can alter the character that other zones will generate.

Software or firmware is utilized to determine where a finger or other pointing device makes contact with the touchpad keyboard. This is the logical division of the zones. In other words, the touchpad will sense a finger anywhere on the touchpad surface, but divides the touchpad surface into zones as defined by the look-up table or other database structure. Because the zones are defined in software or firmware, they can be easily modified if a different keyboard configuration or overlay is desired.

It is observed that the keyboard layout 12 in figure 1 is only an example of any number of possible layouts. For example, the keyboard layout 12 can correspond to a complete QWERTY keyboard. However, it is noted that most portable electronic appliances are

not even capable of recognizing all of the keys on a QWERTY keyboard, such as function or ALT keys. That is because they are unnecessary for the functions of the portable electronic appliances. Most portable
5 electronic appliances are only interested in entering basic alphanumeric data such as the alphabet and numbers 0 through 9. It may not even be necessary to provide lower and upper case. Nevertheless, the presently preferred embodiment of the invention is
10 capable of providing a signal that corresponds to all the keys on a QWERTY keyboard.

A good reason for limiting the number of zones that are available on the keyboard layout 12 is the size of the touchpad keyboard 10. The width and
15 length dimensions of the touchpad keyboard 10 can vary, but it is typically credit card sized. With these dimensions, and the fact that it is preferable not to use a stylus, there is a practical limit to the number of keys that can be disposed on the touchpad
20 surface. Therefore, mode keys can be useful to change the definition of corresponding zones. It is noted that a typical depth of the touchpad keyboard 10 is relatively thin, such as 3 to 5 mm. However, this can be varied as necessary.

25 It has been stated that a preferred application of the touchpad keyboard 10 of the present invention is to use it with an electronic appliance. For example, consider a PALMPILOT(TM) or other PDA. It would be advantageous to provide a keyboard that could
30 be used without having to set the PALMPILOT(TM) down. Accordingly, the keyboard should be capable of being used while grasping the PDA.

Figure 3 is provided as an illustration of a PDA 20 being used with a touchpad keyboard 10. The PDA has a communications port 22 disposed on a bottom edge. The touchpad keyboard 10 includes a compatible 5 communications port 24 on a top edge thereof. When coupled together, the touchpad keyboard 10 should be relatively rigid with respect to the PDA 20, thus making the combination easier to grasp in one hand. The other hand is then free to press the desired keys.

10 In an alternative embodiment, it may be desirable to provide some distance between a resting position of the PDA 20, and the touchpad keyboard 10.

Accordingly, figure 4 is provided as an illustration 15 of a cable 30 that can couple the communications ports 22, 24 together. The length of the cable 30 can be varied.

In another alternative embodiment, it is observed 20 that there are other functions of the electronic appliance that the keyboard may be better at. For example, scrolling is a desirable feature, especially when working on a narrow screen. The PDA 20 may even have keys dedicated to this function. However, the keys may not be easily located, and would certainly not be located on the touchpad keyboard 10.

25 Accordingly, figure 5 is provided as an illustration of a portion of a touchpad keyboard 40 that includes a scrolling wheel 42. The scrolling wheel 42 is disposed in the touchpad keyboard 40, but exposes an edge thereof that a user can roll up and down. The 30 edges thereof may be grooved to ensure good contact with a finger or thumb.

In another alternative embodiment, the size of the touchpad keyboard is probably small enough that

some people may have difficulty in immediately determining if they actually made contact with the desired key, especially if a display screen on the attached PDA is difficult to see. Accordingly, it is 5 possible to provide audible feedback to the user. The audible feedback can be in the form of a voice pronouncing the name of the key or zone that was touched. The volume would likely be kept low but sufficient to hear. Implementation of audible 10 feedback would require additions to touchpad circuitry, including a speaker and a memory chip that includes the digitized sounds to be played for each zone.

Figure 6 is provided as a logical block diagram 15 of the components of touchpad circuitry that are necessary for audible feedback to occur. The touchpad circuitry logic 50 includes circuitry 52 for detecting the object and determining its position, a look-up process 54 for determining the key that corresponds to 20 the location of the object, a look-up process 56 for determining the signal that corresponds to the key, and a transmission process 58. However, once the key has been determined, this information can be sent to a process 60 for determining a corresponding audio 25 message stored in a memory. This audio information is then sent to a microphone 62 where it is generated.

In another alternative embodiment, it is envisioned that it is possible to couple the touchpad keyboard to the PDA or other electronic appliance at 30 all times. For example, the touchpad keyboard can be disposed underneath a cover that is typically folded down over a display screen when the electronic appliance is not in use. Because the touchpad

keyboard is wider than it is long, it may be necessary to turn the touchpad keyboard to make it fit underneath a cover.

Figure 7 shows another alternative embodiment of
5 the invention is a data input device 70 which is coupled via a wire or wireless link to a computer or other device which operates as a web browser terminal 72. The computer or web browser terminal 72 is in turn coupled to the Internet 74 and the World Wide Web
10 (the Web). It is noted that the web browser terminal 7 could also be a television that is coupled to the Internet 74.

Before explaining the data input device 70 in more detail, it is observed that the Web provides
15 access to web sites which are comprised of web pages. Internet access also means that a user can use other convenient forms of communication via the Internet 74, such as email, voice mail, and live voice and audio communication.

20 By means of its layout and the functions provided, the present invention is intended to provide a more convenient method of data input and web navigation. For example, the layout lends itself to grasping or holding the device in one hand by
25 providing a gripping surface along an edge or underneath, while the other hand uses the data input interfaces. A user can sit back in a chair, away from a full-sized keyboard, and easily surf the Internet 74. By providing a miniature touchpad keyboard 76,
30 the user does not have to lean forward to enter any alphanumerical data. A full-function keyboard 76 is provided in the form of a touch-sensitive surface, such as is found in a touchpad of the Cirque(TM)

Corporation. The touch-sensitive surface is preferably a capacitance-sensitive surface that has an overlay template defining the keys of the keyboard. An overlay will be able to have better graphics than, 5 for example, an LCD display can generate.

It should be apparent that the overlay or the touch-sensitive surface can provide tactile feedback to the user. For example, ridges on the overlay can separate the individual keys. Alternatively, the 10 different keys can have different textures. However, all textures and raised surfaces can be eliminated so that the overlay is integral to or flush with the touchpad surface so that it is smooth to the touch.

The touch-sensitive surface provides information 15 regarding the position of a finger or stylus on the surface. This information is translated so that the key which corresponds to that position on the touch-sensitive surface is provided to the computer or web browser terminal 72. For example, the touch-sensitive 20 surface can provide the ASCII code for the key which the computer or web browser terminal 72 expects to see.

In combination with the touchpad keyboard 70 is 25 the ability to generate feedback to the user about the identity of all keys that are pressed. This information is advantageous to the user because of the reduced size of the touchpad keyboard 70. It is not enough that the user knows that a key was pressed, because a finger used to actuate the key may have been 30 misaligned with the desired key. Accordingly, this embodiment of the present invention also provides audible feedback in form of a unique and spoken word for each key.

For example, if the user presses the space bar, the data input device will cause the data input device to send a signal to a speaker to thereby almost instantaneously cause the word "SPACE" to be played by 5 a speaker. The speaker can be located in the computer or the web browser terminal 72, or even the data input device 70 itself. What is important is that the user hears a digitized voice representation which corresponds to each key on the keyboard as it is 10 pressed. In this way, there is no confusion as to which key has been pressed by the user

Furthermore, given the small size of the touchpad keyboard, it is likely that the user will not be looking up at what is being typed on a display, but 15 will instead be looking down at the keyboard. Therefore, the user will instantly know if a wrong key has been pressed without looking up to read what has been typed. The user can backspace over incorrect characters without even looking up from the data input 20 device 70, and then retype the correct characters.

Those skilled in the art will understand that there are alternative ways to achieve this desired audible feedback. For example, the computer 72 can be programmed with a software driver. The driver 25 intercepts the ASCII code which represents a key that has been pressed, and executes a subroutine which causes the digitized voice representation of the pressed key to be generated at a desired speaker.

In combination with the dedicated touchpad 30 keyboard on the touch-sensitive surface is a separate touchpad 78. The touchpad 78 can also be a CIRQUE(TM) brand touchpad which already provides desired web navigation features. These features includes such

things as cursor control, web navigation by moving backwards and forwards through web pages, selection and deselection of objects, dragging of objects, scrolling within web pages, and zooming in and out of web pages.

It is noted that the features described above are the most common or desirable for web navigation. However, the Internet 74 and particularly the Web are very dynamic. It is therefore explicitly stated that 10 the touchpad 78 can be programmed to include other desirable navigation features. At present, the touchpad of the present invention includes a scrolling area for scrolling up and down in a page disposed on the far right-hand side of the touchpad, moving 15 forwards and backwards in web pages on the top of the touchpad, scrolling left and right in a page disposed on the bottom of the touchpad, and zooming in and out on the far left-hand side of the touchpad. Clicking and double-clicking are actuated by tapping once or 20 twice on the touchpad 78, respectively. Movement of a cursor is caused by simply touching the touchpad 78 and then moving the finger.

In an alternative embodiment, it is observed that the touchpad 78 can function to record a signature, or even to function as a digitizing tablet. By providing 25 a separate touchpad surface, the present invention avoids the confusion to the user of having both a keyboard and a touchpad in a single touch-sensitive surface. In the preferred embodiment, the touchpad 30 keyboard 76 is placed above the touchpad 78, but obviously this arrangement can be changed in alternative embodiments.

Because the present invention includes both a keyboard 76 and a separate touchpad 78, the data stream to the computer or web browser terminal 72 will need to include two types of information. Those skilled in the art will recognize that data from the touchpad keyboard 76 and the touchpad 78 can be transmitted, for example, using a packet scheme. Each packet identifies the source of the data, so that it can be sent to the appropriate input.

It is also noted that the preferred embodiment requires only one hand to hold the data input device 70. Advantageously, pressing keys on the touchpad keyboard 76 and using the touchpad 78 does not cause the data input device to sway or make data input difficult. This is because the embodiment includes a hand grip aligned along a vertical axis on the underside of the device. Therefore, the data input device 70 does not require a lap or desktop surface on which to rest when in use. Alternatively, the hand grip can also be angled or made horizontal, depending upon the user's preference.

In this embodiment, the data input device 70 also includes at least one switch which provides rapid access to a selectable web site. In other words, the web browser terminal 72 is caused to display the web site upon activation of the switch.

The switch can also be programmed to go to any desired web site simply upon touching or depressing the switch. The switch can also be marked with a temporary overlay template, or other means of marking which is more permanent.

Another alternative embodiment envisions the capturing of a signature on a pressure sensitive paper to thereby provide a tangible record of the event. It should be assumed that the present invention will 5 function properly on other networks and using other protocols than just those provided by the Web or the Internet 74.

It should also be assumed that the touchpad 78 used for web navigation is responsive to a finger or a 10 stylus and functions with any type of touchpad. Preferably the touchpad utilizes a capacitive-based technology, electromagnetic, electrostatic, ultrasonic, optical, resistive membrane, or other finger or stylus-responsive device. The switch or 15 switches and the keyboard are preferably based on mechanical switches, membrane switches, rubber-dome switches or any other appropriate switch activation technology.

Communication links between the data input device 20 70 and the web browser terminal 72 can include wire, wireless, infrared, radio frequency, ultrasonic, etc. The web browser terminal should be considered to include a video game console, WEBTV®, a television with a digital set top box, etc.

25 A connection between the computer or the web browser terminal 72 and the Web should include telephone modem, cable TV modem, DSL, cellular phone, fiber optic cable, RF satellite modem, T1, T3, Ethernet, twisted pair cabling, etc.

30 Another feature of the preferred embodiment is the manner in which the data input device 70 can be configured. The data input device 70 can be configured using pre-configured settings which are

sent with the device. Alternatively, the user can access pre-configured settings which are available on a web site. Accordingly, the data input device 70, the computer or the web browser terminal 72 would 5 store the settings in non-volatile memory such as flash memory or on a hard disk.

It is to be understood that the above-described arrangements are only illustrative of the application of the principles of the present invention. Numerous 10 modifications and alternative arrangements may be devised by those skilled in the art without departing from the spirit and scope of the present invention. The appended claims are intended to cover such modifications and arrangements.

CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. A touchpad keyboard for entering data into a portable electronic appliance, said touchpad keyboard comprising:
 - a capacitance sensitive touchpad including circuitry for detecting and localizing an object on a surface thereof;
 - an overlay disposed on the surface of the touchpad keyboard, wherein the overlay provides visual feedback that corresponds to signals that will be generated therefrom when certain areas of the touchpad keyboard are pressed; and
 - a communications port for transmitting signals corresponding to keys on the touchpad keyboard.
2. The touchpad keyboard as defined in claim 1 wherein the touchpad keyboard further comprises an audio feedback system which causes a recorded voice to state a name of a key that is touched on the touchpad keyboard.
3. The touchpad keyboard as defined in claim 2 wherein the touchpad further comprises a scrolling wheel disposed in a side thereof, such that a user can rotate the wheel to thereby cause data on a display screen to scroll up or down.
4. The touchpad keyboard as defined in claim 2 wherein the touchpad further comprises a communications cable that is coupled to the communications port to thereby enable remote coupling to a portable information appliance.

5. The touchpad keyboard as defined in claim 2 wherein the overlay further comprises tactile feedback to a user, wherein each separate key on the overlay is
5 separated from all other zones by a raised ridge of material to thereby more discretely separate zones thereon.

10 6. A hand-held data input device for navigating web pages which are displayed on a web browser terminal, and for entering alphanumerical data therein, said data input device comprising:

a hand-held housing;
a touch-sensitive surface which is disposed
15 within the hand-held housing and which functions as a keyboard having discrete locations which define keys thereon;

a touch-sensitive surface which is disposed within the hand-held housing and which functions as a
20 touchpad device for cursor control and navigation of the web pages;

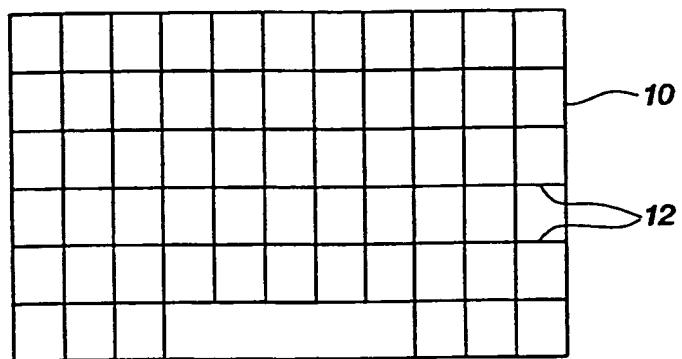
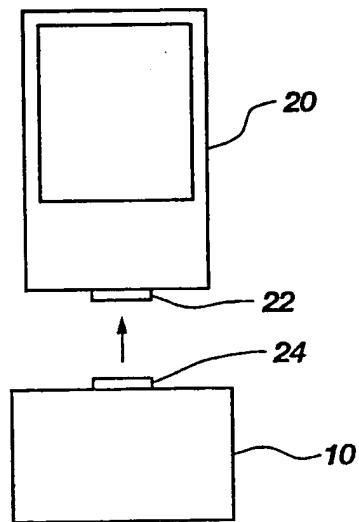
a means for providing audible feedback to a user, to thereby provide precise information as to which key on the keyboard was touched by the user; and

25 a communications link between the keyboard, the touchpad and the web browser terminal which at least transmits and receives data therebetween.

30 7. A hand-held data input device for navigating web pages which are displayed on a web browser terminal which is coupled to a network, and for entering alphanumerical data therein, said data input device comprising:

- a hand-held housing;
- 5 a touch-sensitive surface which is disposed within the hand-held housing and which functions as a keyboard having discrete locations which define keys thereon;
- 10 a touch-sensitive surface which is disposed within the hand-held housing and which functions as a touchpad device for cursor control and navigation of the web pages;
- 15 a microphone for recording audio data for transmission via the network, and for live transmission of audio data for transmission via the network; and
- 15 a communications link between the keyboard, the touchpad and the web browser terminal which at least transmits and receives data therebetween.

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*Fig. 1**Fig. 3*

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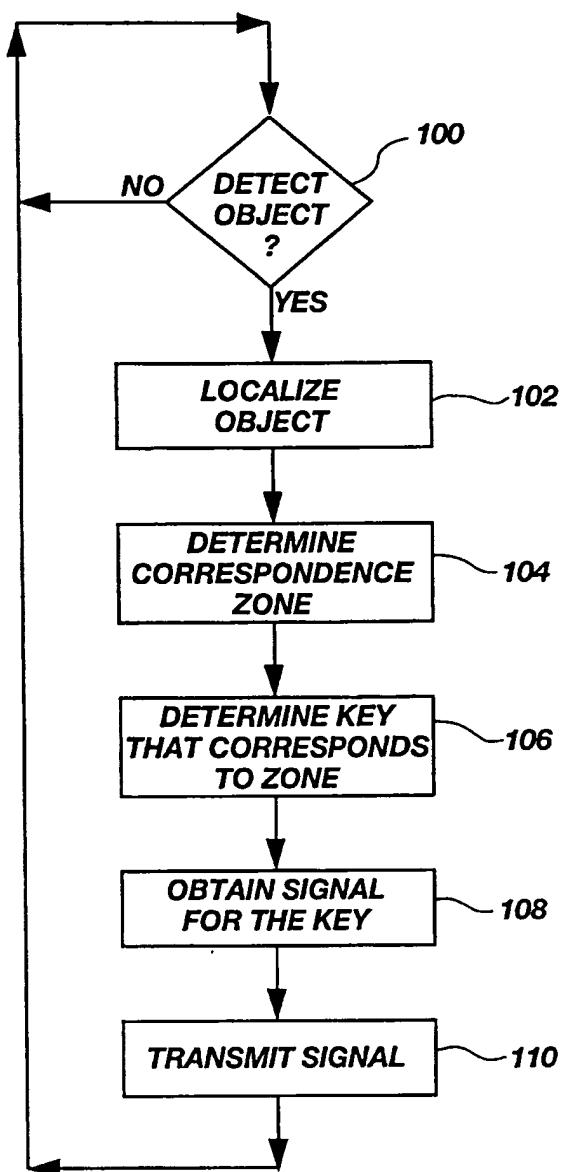


Fig. 2

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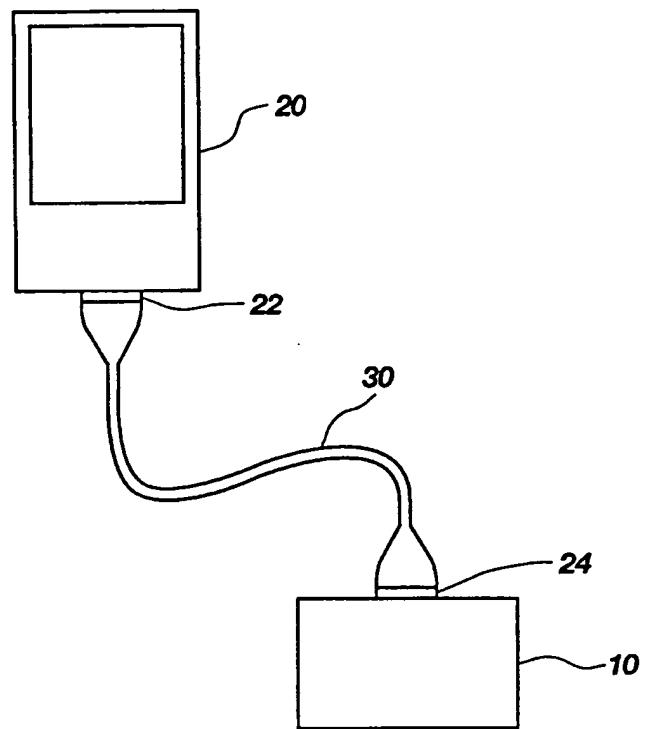


Fig. 4

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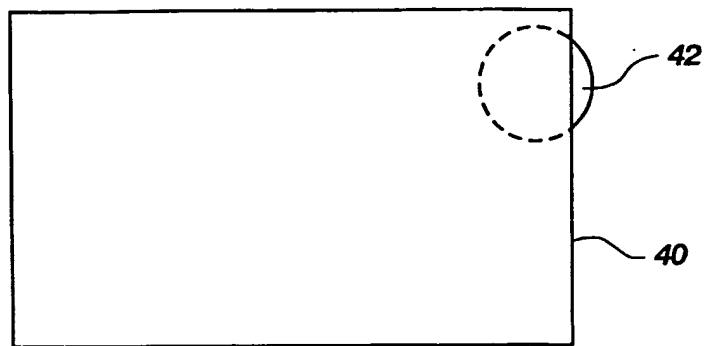


Fig. 5

TOUCHPAD CIRCUITRY LOGIC 50

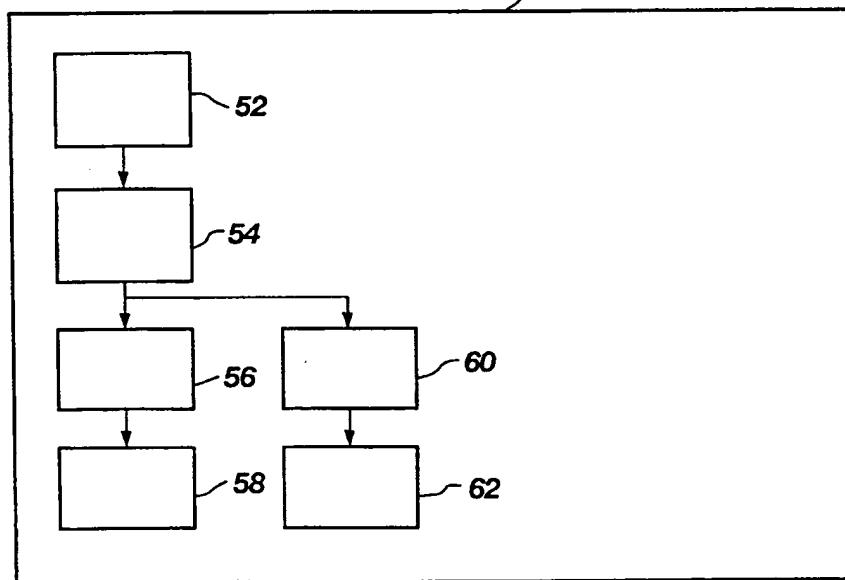


Fig. 6

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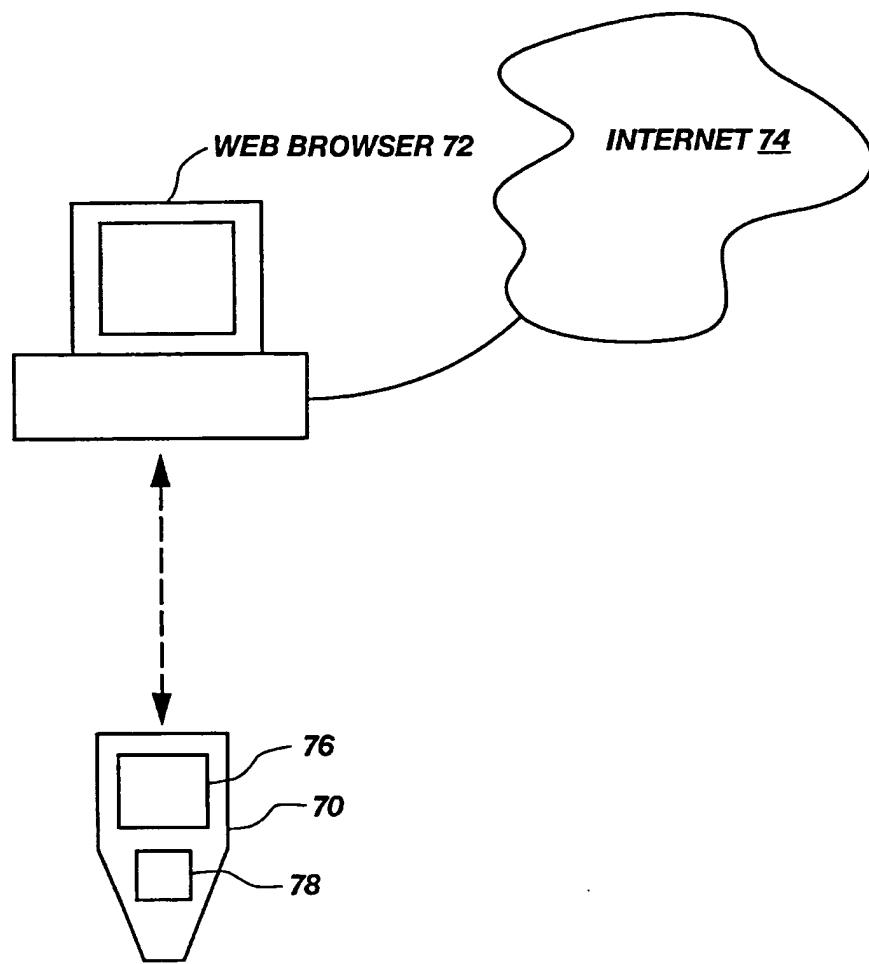


Fig. 7

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No.
PCT/US00/24494

A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER

IPC(7) :Please See Extra Sheet.

US CL :Please See Extra Sheet.

According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both national classification and IPC

B. FIELDS SEARCHED

Minimum documentation searched (classification system followed by classification symbols)

U.S. : 341/20, 33, 35; 345/172, 173, 174, 176, 184. 178/18.02, 18.03; 455/11.1, 556; 379/428

Documentation searched other than minimum documentation to the extent that such documents are included in the fields searched

Electronic data base consulted during the international search (name of data base and, where practicable, search terms used)

EAST

search terms: touch pad, voice, key, rotate, rotary, knob, scroll, internet, browser, pda

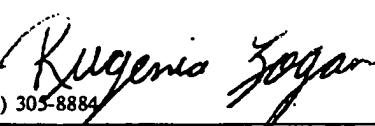
C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category*	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
X	US 5,909,211 A (COMBS et al) 01 JUNE 1999, entire document	1 -----
Y		2-7 -----
X	US 5,887,995 A (HOLCHAN) 30 MARCH 1999, entire document	1 -----
Y		2-7 -----
Y	US 4,728,936 A (GUSCOTT et al) 01 MARCH 1988, figure 3	5
Y	US 5,748,708 A (CHANG) 05 MAY 1998, entire document	2-6
Y	US 5,825,353 A (WILL) 20 OCTOBER 1998, ENTIRE DOCUMENT	2-6

Further documents are listed in the continuation of Box C. See patent family annex.

* Special categories of cited documents:	"T"	later document published after the international filing date or priority date and not in conflict with the application but cited to understand the principle or theory underlying the invention
"A" document defining the general state of the art which is not considered to be of particular relevance	"X"	document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered novel or cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is taken alone
"E" earlier document published on or after the international filing date	"Y"	document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is combined with one or more other such documents, such combination being obvious to a person skilled in the art
"L" document which may throw doubts on priority claim(s) or which is cited to establish the publication date of another citation or other special reason (as specified)	"&"	document member of the same patent family
"O" document referring to an oral disclosure, use, exhibition or other means		
"P" document published prior to the international filing date but later than the priority date claimed		

Date of the actual completion of the international search 28 NOVEMBER 2000	Date of mailing of the international search report 09 JAN 2001
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Name and mailing address of the ISA/US Commissioner of Patents and Trademarks Box PCT Washington, D.C. 20231 Facsimile No. (703) 305-3230	Authorized officer ALBERT WONG Telephone No. (703) 305-8884 
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INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No.
PCT/US00/24494

C (Continuation). DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category*	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
Y,P	US 5,983,073 A (DITZIK) 09 NOVEMBER 1999, ALL	6-7
Y	US 5,889,506 A (LOPRESTI et al) 30 MARCH 1999, ALL	6-7
Y	US 5,590,197 A (CHEN et al) 31 DECEMBER 1996, ALL	6-7
Y	US 5,767,457 A (GERPHEIDE et al) 16 JUNE 1998, ALL	2-6
Y	US 5,910,802 A (SHIELDS et al) 08 JUNE 1999, ALL	6-7
A	US 5,625,673 A (GREWE et al) 29 APRIL 1997, ALL	6-7

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No.

PCT/US00/24494

Box I Observations where certain claims were found unsearchable (Continuation of item 1 of first sheet)

This international report has not been established in respect of certain claims under Article 17(2)(a) for the following reasons:

1. Claims Nos.:
because they relate to subject matter not required to be searched by this Authority, namely:

2. Claims Nos.:
because they relate to parts of the international application that do not comply with the prescribed requirements to such an extent that no meaningful international search can be carried out, specifically:

3. Claims Nos.:
because they are dependent claims and are not drafted in accordance with the second and third sentences of Rule 6.4(a).

Box II Observations where unity of invention is lacking (Continuation of item 2 of first sheet)

This International Searching Authority found multiple inventions in this international application, as follows:

Please See Extra Sheet.

1. As all required additional search fees were timely paid by the applicant, this international search report covers all searchable claims.
2. As all searchable claims could be searched without effort justifying an additional fee, this Authority did not invite payment of any additional fee.
3. As only some of the required additional search fees were timely paid by the applicant, this international search report covers only those claims for which fees were paid, specifically claims Nos.:

4. No required additional search fees were timely paid by the applicant. Consequently, this international search report is restricted to the invention first mentioned in the claims; it is covered by claims Nos.:

Remark on Protest

The additional search fees were accompanied by the applicant's protest.

No protest accompanied the payment of additional search fees.

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No.
PCT/US00/24494

A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER:

IPC (7):

H03K 17/94; H03M 11/00; G09G 5/00; G06K 11/06; G08C 21/00; H04B 7/15

A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER:

US CL :

341/20, 33, 35; 345/173, 174, 176, 184; 178/18.02, 18.03; 455/11.1, 556; 379/428

BOX II. OBSERVATIONS WHERE UNITY OF INVENTION WAS LACKING

This ISA found multiple inventions as follows:

This application contains the following inventions or groups of inventions which are not so linked as to form a single inventive concept under PCT Rule 13.1. In order for all inventions to be searched, the appropriate additional search fees must be paid.

Group I, claim(s)1-5, drawn to a touchpad keyboard.

Group II, claim(s) 6-7, drawn to a hand-held input device for navigating web pages.

The inventions listed as Groups I and II do not relate to a single inventive concept under PCT Rule 13.1 because, under PCT Rule 13.2, they lack the same or corresponding special technical features for the following reasons: The invention in group I pertains to a capacitance keyboard with communications port for transmitting signals. The invention of group II pertains to a web browsing device with a communication link between a keyboard, the touchpad and a web browsing terminal.